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The Corydon Democrat

Explosion at JET plant sends 33 to hospital **Two chemicals accidentally mixed together**

Wade Bell

March 26, 2008 | 07:00 AM

Just five months after Crawford County emergency officials held an exercise on handling a large hazardous materials incident, they had to deal with the real thing Thursday afternoon following an explosion at the 400-employee Jasper Engines and Transmission plant near Carefree that sent 33 people to the hospital.

The incident occurred at about 2:16 p.m. after 2,400 gallons of sulfuric acid and 1,400 gallons of ferric chloride were accidentally mixed together in a tank in the northwest corner of the building. The resulting explosion extensively damaged that corner of the building. A toxic cloud was also visible when firefighters arrived on the scene.

"We heard over the intercom system to evacuate, so we gathered up all the people," JET safety manager Tim Stephenson said. "On our side of the transmission department, there are probably 100 to 125 people. We started going out our evacuation route on the north side of the building and we saw all the white smoke coming out of the ground, so we quickly told everybody to come out this (south) side of the building."

Stephenson said they didn't hear the explosion and didn't know what had happened.

"We thought it was a drill at first," he said. "We have a lot of operation band-aid drills here. Everybody walked out calmly."

It wasn't long, however, until Stephenson and the others realized something serious had happened.

"Once we got everybody outside the building, we could smell it on the south side of the building," Stephenson said. "People started coughing and gagging. I told everybody to head toward the interstate. That was the best way."

Ferric chloride is a corrosive and gives off a slightly acrid odor. It has "severe" ratings in both human health and contact. Sulfuric acid is highly corrosive and a known carcinogen. It can severely irritate the eyes, nose, throat and lungs and build up fluids in the lungs at higher levels. It is also highly reactive with other chemicals. When mixed with ferric chloride, it creates hydrogen chloride. Hydrogen is listed by the Dept. of Transportation as a poison gas and corrosive. It can be irritating and corrosive to the eyes, skin and mucous membranes.

"It was pretty potent," Stephenson said. "People were gasping for air just on this (south) side of the building. When we got out here, we knew it was the real thing ... everybody made pretty good timing getting out."

An incident command center was established at the industrial park entrance off S.R. 66. Crawford County Emergency Management Agency Director Kent Barrow was at Milltown working the flooding issues there when he heard the call about the explosion.

"On my way over here, I didn't know what we were going to deal with and what we were going to do," he said. "I just knew that I had the contacts to make and get those folks here to handle the situation.

"When I was coming out of Milltown ... I was thinking, if we had a large explosion, we might be able to see something, and I didn't and I felt good about that," Barrow said. "I was trying to monitor radio traffic and be in contact with my resources ... "

In a matter of minutes, Barrow had emergency agencies from five counties on their way to help with the situation. The agencies that responded to the scene included the English, Marengo and Leavenworth volunteer fire departments; Crawford, Harrison, Floyd and Louisville EMAs; Indiana Dept. of Homeland Security; Indiana Fire Marshal's Office; EMS services from Perry, Dubois, Crawford and Harrison counties; Salvation Army; Indiana Dept. of Transportation; Indiana State Police; and Crawford County Sheriff's Dept. The Crawford County Community School Corp. provided buses to transport noncontaminated employees away from the scene. The Louisville Metro Hazardous Materials Team also responded because of the seriousness of the situation.

"We got a grip on it pretty fast," Barrow said. "I think everyone worked well together. We established incident command right away. That has been a big dilemma as far as I've seen ongoing, but I think a lot of people will take something from this. And as a county, our response and improvement to response to something of this magnitude has got a lot better. I don't take any of the credit for that. I think these guys knew the significance of this place and they were aware of what they could possibly be dealing with."

S.R. 66 between Magnolia Road and Interstate 64 was closed to traffic, and school traffic to and from nearby Leavenworth Elementary School was rerouted. The English VFD set up a portable decontamination station to handle those who had been affected by the chemicals.

Crawford EMS Director Debbie Wiseman said 26 employees were transported by ambulance to Harrison County Hospital in Corydon, with most being treated for respiratory ailments. None of the injuries were life-threatening, she said. There were also seven walk-in patients to the hospital who were treated. Only one person was kept overnight before being released the next day.

"Jasper Engines got the people out of there," Barrow said. "I feel very fortunate none of the responders were injured, none of the employees were seriously injured. We came away with no fatalities, and I think we fared well."

The Louisville response team sent four firefighters in fully encapsulated chemical suits to check the toxicity around the building later in the afternoon. By about 8:30 p.m., it was determined that the toxicity levels were down enough to move closer to the building. S.R. 66 was reopened at 9:30 p.m. Barrow said Midwest Specialties was to handle any cleanup and decontamination issues in the building.

"There's some vehicles outside that are going to have to be decontaminated that were close

to the building," Barrow said. "Jasper Engines is going to have to look at the structural damage and get that repaired."

Barrow said he didn't know how the investigation into the accident would proceed.

"We know what caused the explosion," he said. "We know it was completely an accident ... I don't know whether there will be a full state investigation. I'm sure there will be things come down the line."

Barrow said the tabletop exercise months earlier played a big part in how well the incident was handled. Some of the conditions in the exercise were the same as the Jasper incident.

"I'm really glad, for my part, that we did the tabletop exercise, and I felt good when I got here," he said. "Jasper Engines is an asset to this county, and all the responders did an excellent job when they got here. No one rushed in and risked their lives ...

"An environment cleanup crew was here pretty quick," Barrow said. "Multiple state agencies, the fire marshal's office, emergency management people from the state. I think everything just clicked ... All the heads that had something involved, as far as incident command went, they all got together just like it's supposed to be, and I just feel really good about it."

Jasper Engines was back in full operation Monday morning.

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Post-Tribune

Careless smoking cause of death

March 26, 2008

BY STAN MADDUX Post-Tribunecorrespondent

WANATAH -- A lighted cigarette apparently started a fire in Nellie Lerch's bedroom, resulting in her death.

That was the ruling Tuesday by Jeff Roseboom, an investigator with the Indiana State Fire Marshal's Office.

Roseboom said officials found evidence of smoking in various locations in the bedroom. Family members also revealed Lerch's practice of smoking in bed, records state.

Officials said Monday about 5 a.m. there were flames shooting from every window and door of the ranch-style home along U.S. 421 south of Wanatah.

Lerch's daughter Janie woke up to smoke detectors along with smoke and flames, and she barely escaped, officials said. Lerch's body was not discovered in bed, indicating she might have tried to get out, but did not make it out of the bedroom, officials said.

Roseboom said smoke can easily overwhelm and disorient sleeping victims.

An autopsy Tuesday confirmed Lerch, 73, died from smoke and soot inhalation before succumbing to burns over much of her body, LaPorte County Chief Deputy Coroner John Sullivan said.

"The family tried to get her to quit smoking through the years without much success," Sullivan said.

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3/25/2008 10:37:00 AM

Woman Dies In Wanatah Blaze

Investigation into cause of Monday morning fire remains under way by officials.

WANATAH - A 73-year-old woman was found dead inside her bedroom Monday morning after a fire destroyed her Wanatah home.

According to John Sullivan, La Porte County chief deputy coroner, Nellie Lerch was sleeping in her bedroom near the front of the home at 14366 S. U.S. 421 when the fire broke out.

She was found face down in her bed, he said, and pronounced dead at the scene of smoke inhalation and burns.

A forensic autopsy will be conducted today at St. Joseph Hospital in Fort Wayne, Ind.

"This was a very unfortunate fire," said Sullivan, who was a friend of Lerch's. Sullivan said there hasn't been a fatal fire in Wanatah in years.

Arriving on the scene around 4:49 a.m., Cass-Clinton Volunteer firefighters reported fire showing from all windows and doorways. Dispatch alerted firefighters occupants were still inside the home, trapped and unable to get out, Sullivan said.

La Porte County Sheriff's Department deputies and Emergency Medical Service personnel tried to gain entrance. They were driven back by intense heat, and flames, according to a statement from the La Porte County Sheriff's Department.

Shortly after firefighters arrived, Janie Lerch, Nellie Lerch's daughter, who was also inside the home at the time of the fire, was found outside the residence and was treated by EMS.

Janie Lerch told police she awoke to the smoke alarm, saw smoke gathering inside the home and fled.

"She was just barely able to get out herself," Sullivan said. "This very easily could have been a double-fatality fire."

Sullivan said Janie Lerch attempted to get her mother to safety but was driven back by flames and smoke.

"Overnight fires like this are very difficult to survive because, of course, people are sleeping," Sullivan said.

La Porte County Sheriff's Detective Michael Raymer, the department's fire investigator, was called to the scene with an investigator from the Indiana State Fire Marshal's Office.

Sullivan said investigators spent all of Monday sifting through the damage in an attempt to gain

more knowledge on the cause and origin of the fire.

"It will be very difficult," Sullivan said.

In addition to Cass-Clinton, Hanna and La Crosse volunteer fire departments also responded.

Kaitlin Vanderpool is a reporter for the La Porte Herald-Argus.

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Session's work: Good, bad and unfinished

OUR OPINION

The Indiana General Assembly began its work in January with leaders cautioning that there would be little time during the short session to tackle much beyond a public mandate for property tax reform. Legislators also began with 368 Senate bills and 409 House bills on their plates.

Two efforts took up far too much of that limited time before they finally went down to failure.

One was an immigration bill that would have punished Indiana employers who hired illegal immigrants. Immigration reform and enforcement are issues that must be addressed on the federal level, not the state level. The much-debated legislation died in conference committee in the final week of the session.

Another was some old business: Senate Joint Resolution 7 to amend the Indiana Constitution to ban same-sex marriage. It was discarded when it failed to get a House hearing after it cleared the Senate.

Legislators somehow managed to find the time to expand gambling to bars and restaurants, where pull-tabs now will be allowed. That is unfortunate and not in Indiana's interests.

On the "well done" list:

- Senate Bill 350 gives community mental health facilities a way to fill a funding gap that will occur if a congressional moratorium on federal Medicaid funding rules is not extended.
- The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Compact was approved.
- An eight-hour "cooling off" period for those charged with domestic violence arrests was enacted.
- Sheriffs' pay was limited and standardized statewide.
- Lawmakers required landlords to install smoke detectors before renters move in and to keep them working throughout a tenancy.
- Employers with 25 or more workers were called upon to set aside lactation rooms for nursing mothers.

- The General Assembly set reduced ignition standard for cigarettes so that neglected ones will be less likely to start house fires.
- Lawmakers required the state Department of Homeland Security to standardize the function of weather warning sirens, so that the residents of all counties will be protected.
- Instead of just requiring drivers to have liability insurance, the state now will allow the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to follow up with uninsured drivers to verify that they have obtained the coverage required by law.
- And who could find fault with establishing an Abraham Lincoln license plate?

Dithering on the issue of driver's training and the minimum ages for learner's permits, probationary driver's licenses and full-privilege driver's licenses will continue. This session, lawmakers called for a committee to study the subject. Let us hope that next year they will apply what already is thoroughly understood as a result of a great deal of study elsewhere. It's well-established that kids need more behind-the-wheel practice and instruction time with competent adult drivers, and restrictions regarding passengers and distracting electronic gadgets.

As for the property tax centerpiece, lawmakers put House Bill 1001 in their "done" column. In fact, it belongs in the "work in progress" column.

When the massive HB 1001 passed, there was a lot of self-congratulation and back-patting in the Statehouse. Lawmakers do deserve praise for their cooperation and shared sense of purpose. They passed a bill that, by shifting some obligations from counties to the state and by imposing tax caps, will reduce taxes for most homeowners.

But shifts and caps aren't the whole answer. They address part of the problem, and not, for example, the need to restructure local government, professionalize the assessment process and assure that local governments can pay for essential services.

These are issues that must be taken up next year. Lawmakers next year also will have an opportunity to end an effort to write the tax caps -- arbitrarily chosen at 1 percent for homes, 2 percent for landlords and 3 percent for businesses -- into the state Constitution.

In total, the 2008 General Assembly was productive. But the work is far from finished.

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Heavy rains draw mixed opinions on storm management

Kristiana Duvnjak | IDS | Date: 3/27/2008

Early last week, IU students saw heavy rain for 36 straight hours, a situation that caused problems for Bloomington residents.

"I stepped into a grassy area, and my entire foot sank into the mud," said sophomore Meagan Mabrey. "I was soaked."

The onslaught of precipitation brought about differing opinions about Bloomington's preparedness for heavy rain situations.

Several students said the IU campus has problem areas when it comes to rain and drainage.

"The grassy part over at Tulip Tree (Apartments) got really bad," freshman William Gu said. "My friend couldn't get across the street to the bus stop."

However, John Hooker, director of Monroe County Emergency Management, said the campus has no major problem areas.

"Monroe County doesn't really flood that much because we only have one river that touches the northwest part of the county," Hooker said. "If it overflows, it just goes into the farm fields."

Some students said they agree with Hooker.

"I live in Eigenmann, and I never have issues," freshman Emilee Mabrey said. "I feel like I'm always walking uphill, and I'm thinking that it's for the drainage."

To be sure that IU students can get around campus without rain delays, the Monroe County Emergency Management team works hand in hand with the IU Risk Management team and listens to conference calls from surrounding cities to be sure the necessary precautions are taken to prevent any major flooding or damage, Hooker said. Its mission is to create and maintain an emergency management program that helps prepare, respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters impacting the public, government and businesses of Monroe County, according to the team's Web site.

The Monroe County Emergency Management team will hold a storm class on Friday at Bloomington Hospital, which will help educate the community about precautions to take and safety tips to follow during severe weather.

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The Corydon Democrat



Indiana Conservation Officers Gary Pennington, middle, and Dennis Talley help Bruce Eby of White Cloud from his house early Thursday afternoon after the Blue River, swollen by two straight days of heavy rain, flooded Eby's home. According to the National Weather Service, the Blue River reached its highest crest ever recorded in White Cloud by nearly a foot. (Photo by Alan Stewart)

Severe flooding follows rains

Lee Cable and Alan Stewart

March 26, 2008 | 07:01 AM

Coupled with ground saturation from a recent snowfall, two days worth of heavy precipitation last Tuesday and Wednesday dropped anywhere from four to six inches of rain in the area, swelling creeks and rivers out of their banks, closing several roads and forcing evacuations.

Hit hardest was Milltown, where, by early last Wednesday morning, several homes were being evacuated as the Blue River came out of its banks. The one-lane bridge there became impassable as water surrounded it. At 10:30 a.m., Milltown officials declared a state of emergency, and, by 4 p.m., the floor of the bridge was almost under water. The curved bridge on North Milltown Road, which had been closed earlier for repairs, was re-opened for emergency traffic only. All other traffic in and out of Milltown had to be routed to Speed Road.

The Crawford County Commissioners declared a state of emergency at about 2:25 p.m., as several roads in the county were affected by high water and at least one bridge was washed out.

"We put everything we could on upper shelves," said Jayne Riddle, who, with her husband, Mike, owns Milltown Mini Mart. "We didn't have a lot of time to get ready, but we did the best we could."

About eight Milltown families were moved from their homes; some homes ended up with as much as

four feet of water in them. An old barber shop building that sat near the river washed away and Castaways Restaurant, which sits just yards from the old dam, received extensive damage. The Blue River Café, Phillips' Heating and Air Conditioning, the American Legion and the mini mart all had water in their buildings.

Members of the Milltown Volunteer Fire Dept. assisted in the town as needed.

Farther north, U.S. 150 in Fredericksburg was closed and most houses near the Blue River in that town were inundated by Wednesday morning.

In Harrison County, Bruce Eby, 50, who lives in the White Cloud area west of Corydon, was rescued by boat last Wednesday.

Eby and his wife, Roni, knew the nearby Blue River would likely flood their property. She got out, but he remained in their residence with their cats and exotic birds to try and save some belongings. By the time he completed his tasks, the car he was hoping to leave in was already partially submerged.

"It came up really quick," Bruce Eby said of the Blue River.

He was willing to ride out the flood, but when the water was a couple of feet deep in the house, Eby's wife decided it was time for him to come out. She called the Harrison County Sheriff's Dept. to have her husband rescued.



Caesars Indiana is closed for the better part of four days by a rising Ohio River. (Photo by Brian Smith)

Conservation Officers Mac Spainhour, Terry Allen, Gary Pennington and Dennis Talley, Officer Anthony Mills of the Harrison County Sheriff's Dept. and Harrison Emergency Management Agency Director Greg Reas made the rescue using an inflatable Zodiac boat that is designed for swift water rescue. By the time they got to Eby, there was about four to five feet of water in the house, Spainhour said. Eby had to exit the house through a first floor window.

A 500-gallon propane tank belonging to the Ebys was washed away by the water and ended up lodged in some trees about a quarter-mile downstream, and a Chevrolet Z-71 pickup belonging to the Ebys was also flooded.

The National Weather Service said the flooding in White Cloud was at the highest point ever recorded — by almost a full foot — Thursday afternoon.

Last Tuesday night, a family south of Palmyra, off Old East Road, had to be evacuated. Jessica Ollis and four juveniles had to be pulled from her home after rising water — estimated by Conservation Officer Jim Hash at 10 feet deep in some spots — threatened their safety.

"The water was rising and surrounding the home on all sides," Hash said. "I don't think it ever got high enough to enter the home, but they felt it was a safety concern so we removed them."

Members of the Palmyra Volunteer Fire Dept. assisted in the rescue.

"I think this could be a bad year for flooding because the ground is already saturated," Hash said. "If we get an inch or two here or there, we'll likely have problems again."

At Caesars Indiana, 50 to 60 workers remained at the 5,200-passenger vessel and hotel after the rising Ohio River forced the closing of the property Wednesday afternoon. A concert Friday by Creedence Clearwater Revisited was postponed to Sept. 14.

The Blue River finally crested about 7 a.m. Thursday and cleanup began almost immediately.

"My mom and stepdad, Bob and Norma Bright, who live on Back Street (in Milltown), got most of their valuable stuff out," Jim Adamson said. "They've lived on the river for over 20 years, so they're used to it. They just take it in stride anymore. As soon as the water goes down, we'll be in there hosing everything down and cleaning up the mess.

"I've been remodeling a small house next to theirs," he said. "Now, I guess I'll just have to remodel it again."

The Salvation Army set up a refreshment trailer behind the town hall for flood workers and displaced residents, and the Red Cross helped people find shelter and fill out documents for flood assistance and insurance purposes.

The entrance to the one-lane bridge in Milltown had been washed away, requiring the Crawford County Highway Dept. to make temporary repairs to it.

Tony Phillips was washing out and cleaning his store. The Riddles had cleaned the mini mart and were open for business. Blue River Café officials already had people calling in for reservations and hoped to be ready for business by the weekend.

By Friday afternoon, most of the firefighters had gone home for showers and some much-needed rest. Indiana Ninth District Congressman Baron Hill visited the town late Friday afternoon but most of the cleanup had been completed.

Down at Caesars, security personnel said cars started lining up on S.R. 111 at 6:30 a.m. Sunday for that day's anticipated 8 a.m. re-opening. Hess said despite the late start, attendance figures compared to last year's Easter weekend were very comparable.

Though the casino and hotel have re-opened, one parking garage remained closed yesterday due to water and debris.

A slow moving front may become the focus for additional unneeded rainfall late today (Wednesday) through Friday along and north of the Ohio River. Depending on the track of the precipitation, up to an inch of additional rain could fall.

[Click here for photo gallery.](#)

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March 27, 2008

Take cover: Storms on tap

Star report

As the adage goes, wait a day in Indiana and the weather will change.

That'll be the case today after Wednesday's high temperature reached a near-perfect 60 degrees. Rain and isolated thunderstorms were on tap for the Indianapolis-metro area overnight and into today.

The high Wednesday in Indianapolis was 58 degrees just before 4 p.m., the National Weather Service said.

The chance of thunderstorms was expected to last through Friday morning.

Today's high should reach the low 50s. Friday will be cooler, forecasters said, with highs in the upper 40s.

Elsewhere, the weather service issued a hazardous weather advisory for southwest Indiana, saying that scattered thunderstorms could produce locally heavy rain. Flood warnings were also issued for many counties in western and southern Indiana.

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City of Anderson Tests Flood Response Plan

By Network Indiana

3/26/2008

Anderson city officials are preparing for yet another major flood.

City, county and state officials will be conducting an exercise Wednesday simulating a major flood to test the city's emergency operations plan.

Flooding is the number one disaster to affect a community. Flooding has resulted in 26 of 34 presidential disaster declarations within the state since 1954.

Local emergency management deputy director John Kinley says planning and emergency training is key to the response and recovery efforts should a major flood strike.

Anderson's preparedness comes on the 95th anniversary of the Great Flood of 1913. The flood restricted travel and many families had to be rescued from their homes and vehicles. Bridges weakened and collapsed and water was several feet deep in many areas throughout the city.

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Homeowners Have Concerns about Property Values

Updated: March 26, 2008 06:13 PM EDT

Tippecanoe County's 2007 property assessment notices are arriving in the mailbox. And some homeowners are seeing a dramatic difference in their land values.

This is the second year Tippecanoe County has sent out notices informing people what their land and home assessment is. However some people, like Terry Yoder, saw a big difference in two years. "Logically, how does land in a flood plain go up thirty eight to forty percent in value, in just one year," said Yoder.

Terry Yoder said in 2006, his land value was assessed at \$11,500 dollars. This year that same land was assessed at \$15,600 dollars, a 41 hundred dollar difference. Yoder said what's most surprising about the increase, is that his land still has damage from February's flood. "I don't know whether she took into account the sand out here maybe she thinks it's beach front property, but I think this is ridiculous."

Tippecanoe County Assessor Samantha Steele says Yoder's land value increased because it was not at the market value of other properties in the area. Steele said several areas in Tippecanoe County did see a land values increase, which people should examine carefully. "Do please do file an appeal if you have concerns about your assessments. We're asking people to give us time to gather all the appeals and then respond to the taxpayers one on one," said Steele.

Tippecanoe County Auditor Jennifer Weston said tax bills are determined based on budget and levies in that area and the tax rate. Weston says it's hard to determine how much property values will affect tax bills. "It's really hard to tell this early in the game what a tax bill will look like so you need to consider when you get your values whether you want to appeal based on that value and not so much what the tax bill would calculate to," said Weston.

Yoder said as a retiree on a fixed income, he hopes his tax bill doesn't go up too much. "They're trying to take and say a value's worth so much, they're not even going to take a look at what it's worth, and that's bull."

So far, the Tippecanoe County Assessor's Office has received 41 appeals for 2007 property assessments.

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Herald Journal

NIPSCO gets extension on study

Federal commission extends deadline for mandated analysis on Norway and Oakdale.

Kevin Howell

Reporter

Northern Indiana Public Service Company will have a little longer to complete an analysis on the regulation of Norway and Oakdale Dams.

On March 4, NIPSCO was notified by its licensing agency Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that it had 14 days to conduct an analysis of the capability of the dams related to flooding on the Tippecanoe River in January and February.

But that deadline has been extended according to FERC spokesperson Celeste Miller.

"We received a request from NIPSCO for an extension until April 4 for filing a response to our letter," said Miller. "At this point in time, we expect NIPSCO to meet that deadline."

The letter to NIPSCO was a result of concerns from flood victims along the Tippecanoe.

In one, Tippecanoe Ranch Road resident Barbara Bowman raised several points.

"Why is it not feasible for NIPSCO to lower the water levels of Lakes Shafer and Freeman when the National Weather Service has determined that 'flooding along the Tippecanoe River is imminent due to snow melt, warm temperatures and 6-10 inches of rain?' Bowman asked Peggy Harding, a FERC regional engineer.

"Why couldn't the lakes be lowered in anticipation of these scenarios regardless of whether they happen or not?" Bowman also noted that FERC mandated how NIPSCO operates their hydro electric facilities and it follows that FERC must bear responsibility for the devastation that occurred.

As a result of those and similar communications, Harding notified NIPSCO vice president of electrical generation Jerome Weeden to analyze the situation.

"This office is continuing to receive numerous inquiries and requests for information regarding the operation of the Norway and Oakdale dams during this past winter's two significant flood events," Harding wrote.

She went on to say that the inquiries consistently raise the point that the dams are 'run of river' dams and can't mitigate severe flood levels, but no one has explained why the dams can't lower downstream flood levels.

"Within 14 days from the date of this letter, please provide your response to the concerns expressed in the inquiries," wrote Harding.

She added that any response should provide - in layman's terms - a technical explanation of the capability of the dams to provide flood control benefits during a range of floods with recurrence intervals of 10 years to 500 years. "And specifically the two significant flood events experienced this past winter."

Harding also asks that findings be supported with recorded flow data and the storage capabilities of the dams.

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Herald Journal

Clock is running for FEMA flood relief

New applications from residents hurt by flooding earlier in the year will not be taken after March 31.

Doug Howard

Reporter

With less than a week left to apply, residents and business owners of Indiana counties that sustained damage from storms and flooding that occurred from Jan. 7 - March 14 who have not already done so are urged to register for federal disaster assistance.

From an initial nine counties declared a disaster area by President Bush in late January, the list has grown to include Allen, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Dekalb, Elkhart, Fulton, Huntington, Jasper, Kosciusko, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Pulaski, St. Joseph, Starke, Tippecanoe, Whitley and White.

Residents and business owners in those counties who sustained damage from storms and flooding from Jan. 7 - March 14 and have not already done so are urged to register for disaster assistance by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or 1-800-462-7585 for the speech or hearing impaired or logging on to the FEMA Web site, www.fema.gov. New applications will not be accepted after the March 31 deadline.

The clock is ticking also on the last day to talk one on one with FEMA representatives at Disaster Recovery Centers in Delphi and Monticello. The centers will shut down at the close of business on Friday. However, the Disaster Recovery Center in White County at 315 N. Illinois St. in Monticello will make the transition Saturday into a U.S. Small Business Administration Disaster Loan Outreach Center. Hours there will be from 9 a.m. till 6 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

"We've planned to stay open until April 3, but if the demand is there, there is a possibility that we could stay open longer," said Jan Kilgore, an SBA loan specialist who will be making the move from the old Delphi middle school gymnasium to the Monticello EMA office on Saturday to assist loan applicants with questions and help with the loan closing process.

A DRC in Jasper County closed earlier this month, part of a cycle repeated wherever FEMA and the SBA are invited for emergency assistance.

"Closing a recovery center does not mean we are closing down registrations for disaster assistance," said Federal Coordinating Officer Mike Smith. "Indiana residents in counties designated for Individual Assistance can still register with FEMA by phone or on the Internet."

Since opening long term DRCs in Delphi and Monticello in early February, FEMA has serviced 216 applications in Carroll and 469 in White County, part of the 2,700 Indiana residents who have applied for disaster assistance.

A total of over \$13 million in individual assistance from FEMA and loans from SBA have been approved as of this week.

With the DRCs closing, FEMA workers already are being reassigned to other areas.

"We go where we're needed," said Sandy Jasmund, a FEMA public information officer. "We go from disaster to disaster in our region, and sometimes out of our region, too."

FEMA representatives working at the DRC in Delphi said that although traffic has tapered off in the past few weeks, they are still taking applications and seeing applicants for follow up issues.

"If their house was really wiped out, it takes more than one time to come back and get everything done that they need to do," said Sarah Gilbert, the DRC manager in Delphi.

She said a common misconception heard from applicants is that they are not eligible for flood insurance.

"They can buy FEMA flood insurance even if they're not in a flood zone, if they're not in a flood plain," she said. "If this is the first incidence that it's happened to them or the 10th, they're eligible to buy FEMA flood insurance. They need to find an agent that is willing to sell it to them or they can go online."

Flood insurance is available for both real and personal property, she said.

"We've had some applicants that have had well over 50 percent damage, that's substantial damage and that can kick in an elevation requirement when they rebuild," said Jerry Smithers, a FEMA mitigation specialist working at the center in Delphi. "What they've been trying to determine is 'how much do we need to elevate? Where are we located and how is that going to impact on our remodeling and reconstruction?'"

He said many of those issues have since been resolved in the form of Indiana Senate Bill 104, recently signed into law.

FEMA regulations already require homeowners to comply with the changes made in the bill, which cuts down on differences between federal and state regulations to create less hassle during the permitting process for homeowners.

While homeowners are still required to get permits for reconstruction, the code now allows for the rebuilding of homes damaged by flooding, not just from other disasters such as fires or tornados.

"The information has to come from the state, to the county, to the planning office and then they make the legal determination there as to how that's going to affect each individual homeowner when they rebuild," he said.

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Flood waters bring many health risks

Posted: Wednesday, Mar 26, 2008 - 09:42:51 am EDT

State health officials are reminding Hoosiers that flooding can pose serious health risks, such as exposure to waterborne diseases, drowning and dangers associated with cleaning up flood-damaged areas.

"It is best to wait until the floodwaters recede before beginning any clean-up efforts," said State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe, M.D. "People can be severely injured due to slippery conditions, poor visibility, floating debris or electrical shock. In addition, small cuts or scratches on the skin can make someone more susceptible to diseases like tetanus, E. coli, and other pathogens."

State health officials recommend people in flooded areas make sure they are up-to-date on their tetanus immunizations. Routine tetanus boosters are recommended every 10 years. For people who receive more serious wounds, a tetanus booster is appropriate if they have not received one within the last five years.



Tetanus is an acute, often fatal, disease caused by an exotoxin. Symptoms of tetanus include generalized rigidity and painful spasms of skeletal muscles. The muscle stiffness usually involves the jaw (lockjaw) and neck and then becomes more generalized. Any type of wound, major or minor, could be an entry source for the tetanus organism. State health officials advise anyone who sustains an injury from materials affected by flood waters to seek immediate medical attention.

Tetanus vaccines are available from your primary health care provider or your local health department.

Untreated sanitary waste can end up in waterways and on streets when heavy rain overwhelms sewer systems and treatment plants. Wells and cisterns may also be affected. Wells that are located in a flooded area should be assumed to be contaminated. Health officials recommend people discontinue use of the well water until it can be inspected by a professional well contractor. Even when the water recedes, E. coli and other pathogens remain present in pools of standing water.

Standing water is also a perfect breeding ground for microorganisms. For those with asthma, allergies and other respiratory problems, these microorganisms can pose a serious health risk when they become airborne and inhaled.

Individuals exposed to floodwaters should wash their hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water. For household cleaning after floodwater contamination, disinfect all surfaces. A bleach solution of 1/4-cup chlorine bleach to one gallon of water works well.

Some tips for safely cleaning up a home or business after the floodwaters recede include:

- Turn off the electricity.
- Clean and dry wet light fixtures before turning the electricity back on.
- Items that cannot be salvaged after a flood and must be thrown away include wet ceiling tiles, paper products, baseboards, gypsum board (also known as dry wall), and insulation.
- Carpets may be saved by wet vacuuming, shampooing, and making certain the carpet is completely dry.
- Mattresses or other large items soaked with floodwater will probably have to be discarded. Some mattresses can be salvaged after disinfecting and air-drying.
- Wipe wood and metal studs with a bleach solution and allow to air dry.
- If possible, open windows and doors during the clean-up process and leave them open for at least 24 hours.

Hoosiers should also stay away from areas that are prone to flooding and take flash flood warnings seriously. Attempting to cross swiftly-flowing water on foot or in a vehicle is hazardous and should be avoided.

Health officials also remind Hoosiers to prepare well in advance of a flood emergency. The State Department of Health recommends that residents stockpile at least a 72-hour supply of clean water, food and medicine for every member of the household.

To learn more about staying healthy during a flood, visit the Indiana State Department of Health Web site at www.statehealth.IN.gov.

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3/25/2008 7:00:00 PM

Residents, Businesses Can Still Apply For FEMA Help

Tim Robertson
Staff Writer

Hoosiers who suffered flood damage in recent months have until Monday to register for disaster assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Twenty-one counties statewide, including Kosciusko County, were part of a presidential disaster declaration, qualifying county residents and business owners who suffered damage from storms and flooding that occurred between Jan. 7 and March 14 for FEMA assistance.

FEMA issued a reminder today that no new applications for aid will be accepted after the Monday deadline. Loan applications to the U.S. Small Business Administration for disaster-related losses to real and personal property also must be submitted by Monday.

According to the FEMA release, federal and state disaster officials are urging eligible residents who have not done so to apply as soon as possible by calling the registration number, 800-621-3362 or, for the speech or hearing impaired, 800-462-7585. Individuals also may register for disaster assistance at the FEMA Web site, www.fema.gov

Applicants who have questions about the disaster assistance programs or questions about the status of their previously filed applications may use FEMA's Helpline by calling 800-621-3362.

According to FEMA, as of today, more than 2,700 Indiana residents have applied for disaster assistance, with more than \$13.1 million approved as disaster funds for individuals affected by the disaster. Of those funds, \$6.6 million are in the form of SBA disaster loans for individuals and businesses.

Other counties included in the presidential disaster declaration are: Allen, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Dekalb, Elkhart, Fulton, Huntington, Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Marshall, Newton, Noble, Pulaski, Saint Joseph, Starke, Tippecanoe, Whitley and White.

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3/26/2008

Firefighters get certification

Volunteer firefighters from throughout Brown County recently completed training for and were certified in Hazardous Materials Awareness and Hazardous Materials Operations.

Hazardous Materials Awareness educates emergency responders in the basic safeguards in responding to hazardous materials, consulting references for additional information and implementation of the proper notification process.

Hazardous Materials Operations is the study of chemical characteristics and reactions related to storage, transportation and handling of hazardous materials, with emphasis on emergency situations, firefighting and control.

Firefighters from Cordry-Sweetwater, Hamblen Township, Fruitdale, Van Buren and Brown County (Nashville) volunteer fire departments participated in the training, which was held at the Nashville department.

Certification requires emergency responders to complete 16 hours of training.

The training program was funded by Indiana Department of Homeland Security District 8 and was taught by instructor Dak Kelp, chief of the Brown County Volunteer Fire Department.

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Airport fire protection training about to start

By Crystal Garcia

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — Airport volunteers and members of the Terre Haute Fire Department will begin fire protection training for the airport Monday.

Training will run through April 4 and take place at the Terre Haute International Airport-Hulman Field and the Terre Haute Fire Department on Fruitridge Avenue, except for April 4 when it is in Cincinnati, according to Tom Long, airport director.

As of 7 a.m. Tuesday, the Indiana Air National Guard's fire protection will end. Members of the Terre Haute Airport Authority Board voted two weeks ago to hire WAMBI, a Kentucky-based company, to come to the airport and train personnel as well as city firefighters for \$3,500.

About eight airport employees volunteered for the training. The city will be sending 17 firefighters to the training, according to Chief Jeff Fisher.

Federal Aviation Administration representatives will be at the airport April 8 to conduct a surveillance. FAA regulations require no longer than a three-minute response time to get to the middle of the airport's longest runway.

With the closest city fire station on Fruitridge Avenue and some railroad tracks between that station and the airport, there could be issues.

Long said he hopes the airport and city can make an arrangement in which at least one city firefighter can be at the airport station between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Those are the hours the station will be in operation as they get started, he said, and later they'll be on call.

He said regulations also require at least one emergency medical services person be at each scene, for which Fisher said they will try to work out details.

In other airport news, members of the board approved an agreement with Indiana American Water to take over the waterline on the west side of the airport.

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